



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL  
GOVERNOR

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CONTACT: Rich Harris, 860-524-7313  
[rich.harris@ct.gov](mailto:rich.harris@ct.gov)

## **Governor Rell Presents State's \$84 Million Plan for Winter Heating Aid**

*Assistance Increased for Homes Using Heating Oil*

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced that she is sending legislative leaders a plan for distributing a record \$84 million in winter heating aid under the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP). The plan makes substantial increases in benefit levels for elderly, low-income and other vulnerable households.

Governor Rell said the plan will provide more assistance to more people, complementing a variety of other initiatives under way to help hard-pressed consumers cope with the high costs of energy.

“With heating oil prices expected to be in the \$5-a-gallon range, we know that thousands of our citizens will be struggling this winter,” Governor Rell said. “The CEAP program is expected to serve more than 90,000 households this season, well above the level from last year. And recipients will need higher benefits just to buy 125 gallons of heating oil, the typical minimum delivery, because fuel prices have gone up so much. So we have structured CEAP to reach as many people and provide as much assistance as possible.

“No one should be forced to choose between heating and eating, or between staying healthy and staying warm,” the Governor said. “Yet the mounting pressures of energy prices, gasoline prices and food prices have placed an unprecedented burden on more Connecticut families than every before. We may be sweating through the hottest days of the summer, but we must turn our eyes to the winter now so that a safety net is in place before the bitter cold arrives.”

CEAP offers a range of benefits to low-income households, the elderly and families with small children. The basic benefit this year will range up to \$675 for homeowners and renters whose heat is not included in the rent and up to \$270 for renters whose heat is included in the rent.

In addition, households heating with “deliverable” fuels – heating oil and propane – may be eligible for a one-time crisis benefit of up to \$400. And Safety Net Assistance Benefits of up to \$625 – an increase from last year’s level of \$400 – may be available to deliverable fuel households that have exhausted their basic and crisis benefits and face a life-threatening situation.

The number of \$625 grants that may be awarded has been increased from two to three for “vulnerable” households, defined as households where one or more resident is elderly, disabled or under the age of 6. Non-vulnerable households may receive up to two Safety Net Assistance Benefits.

Assistance may also be available through the Contingency Heating Assistance Program (CHAP), which is available to households with incomes up to 60 percent of the median state income. CHAP offers a basic benefit of \$300; deliverable fuel households may also qualify for a \$325 crisis benefit (up from \$200 last year). The combined CHAP benefit of \$625 for deliverable fuel households should be enough to buy the minimum heating oil delivery of 125 gallons.

Funding for a furnace repair/replacement and tuning program offered under the auspices of CEAP has also been increased, from \$500,000 last year to \$1 million this year.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) administers CEAP and CHAP. The plan – which will be sent to House Speaker James A. Amann and Senate President Don Williams – must also be approved by three committees: Appropriations, Human Services and Energy and Technology.

CEAP and CHAP are funded primarily through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) block grant from the federal government. DSS and OPM are projecting at least \$40.9 million in regular federal funding will be available; the state has historically received tens of millions of dollars more in LIHEAP “contingency” funding awarded at the discretion of the President. Governor Rell and other New England governors have also been pressing Congress to increase LIHEAP funding for this winter.

Other heating assistance efforts are available or planned in Connecticut. Operation Fuel, a non-profit agency created by the state, administers energy assistance funded largely through donations made by utility customers on their monthly bills.

On Monday, the state Bond Commission is expected to approve \$5 million in funding for a program that offers rebates of up to \$500 to homeowners who replace their furnaces with more efficient models and \$2 million for loans to help pay for other energy conservation improvements.

Separately, Governor Rell this month proposed using a projected surplus of about \$22.3 million from the state budget year that ended July 1 for additional heating assistance programs, some of which would be administered through Operation Fuel. In addition, through the Governor’s Care & Share program, Governor Rell has challenged residents, businesses and state employees to match \$50,000 in contingency funding she has awarded to two Connecticut food banks.